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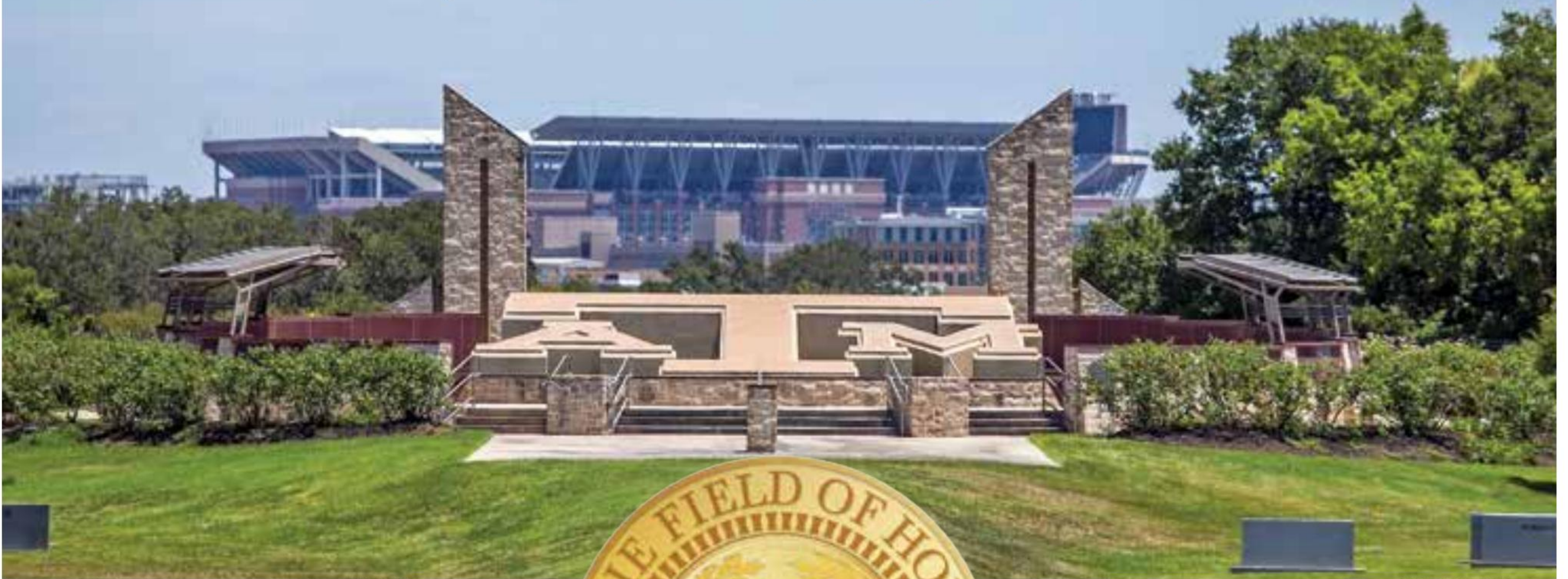


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ROB HAVENS '88

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BY ROB HAVENS '88

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**ON THE COVER:** President Mark Welsh III welcomes new A.D. Trev Alberts to Aggieland. Photo by Rob Havens '88



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# Howdy Ags!

Well, a lot has happened in the last two months! Thanks to General Welsh III and the selection committee we have a new Director of Athletics, Trev Alberts. He was welcomed to Aggieland via a celebration in the Hall of Champions. Please enjoy the story in this issue of his first address to the 12th Man as well as his first media press conference. We are excited to have him and his family in College Station.

Both of our basketball teams earned a spot in the dance and the men won their first NCAA tournament game in the Buzz Williams era. I drove out to Memphis and got to cover the first men's basketball win under our new AD. The arena in Memphis was filled with Nebraska fans who were ready to cheer their team onto their first-ever NCAA tourney win. But Buzz and the boys played their best game of the year and sent the Husker fans home disappointed.

Our football team under our new head coach has started spring practice. After lots of hard work assembling this team, the new staff is finally getting to hit the field and start to implement their new system. The thing we have heard most since Elko arrived is how he has installed discipline and accountability, traits that former players on the team have said needed to happen. Please enjoy reading about the new assistant coaches in this issue.

Our baseball team is the talk of the town right now, as the Aggies have moved up to #1 in the nation. Our starting pitching is much improved and our hitting has been great. This team knows how to win and they're never out of a game. I loved going up to Dallas and watching them win three games in Globe Life Park. Oh, watching them beat tu was a lot of fun too! Can't wait to see how the rest of the season goes.

**Gig'em!**

*Rob '88*



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# Aggieland

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Our program is made possible in part through Hotel Tax Revenue from the City of College Station through the Arts Council of Brazos Valley.







## RISING ABOVE

Aicha Coulibaly elevates over an Arkansas defender in the Aggies' big comeback win over the Razorbacks. Trailing by fourteen in the third quarter, Texas A&M battled back to beat the Hogs by 73-67. Coulibaly, who transferred to A&M from Auburn, has been a huge piece in the team's resurgence this year. She is second on the team in scoring and third on the team in rebounds. Photo by Rob Havens '88









## HOMERUN TROT

Sophomore center fielder Jace Laviolette cruises around the bases after his second home run of opening night vs McNeese. The talented 6'6, 230 lbs talent out of Tompkins High School in Katy had 5 home runs in his first four games this season. He knocked in eleven runs and posted a .353 batting average in the first four games. Photo by Rob Havens '88







## SIGNATURE WIN

Boots Radford knocks down a three-pointer over the outstretched hand of a Volunteer defender in the Aggies upset win over the #6 team in the nation.

Radford was nine of seventeen from the field and scored 27 points in the 85-69 victory. The Aggies never trailed in the game as they played their best game of the season. 12,995 fans filled Reed as the Aggies secured their fifth win over a Quadrant 1 opponent. Photo by Rob Havens '88

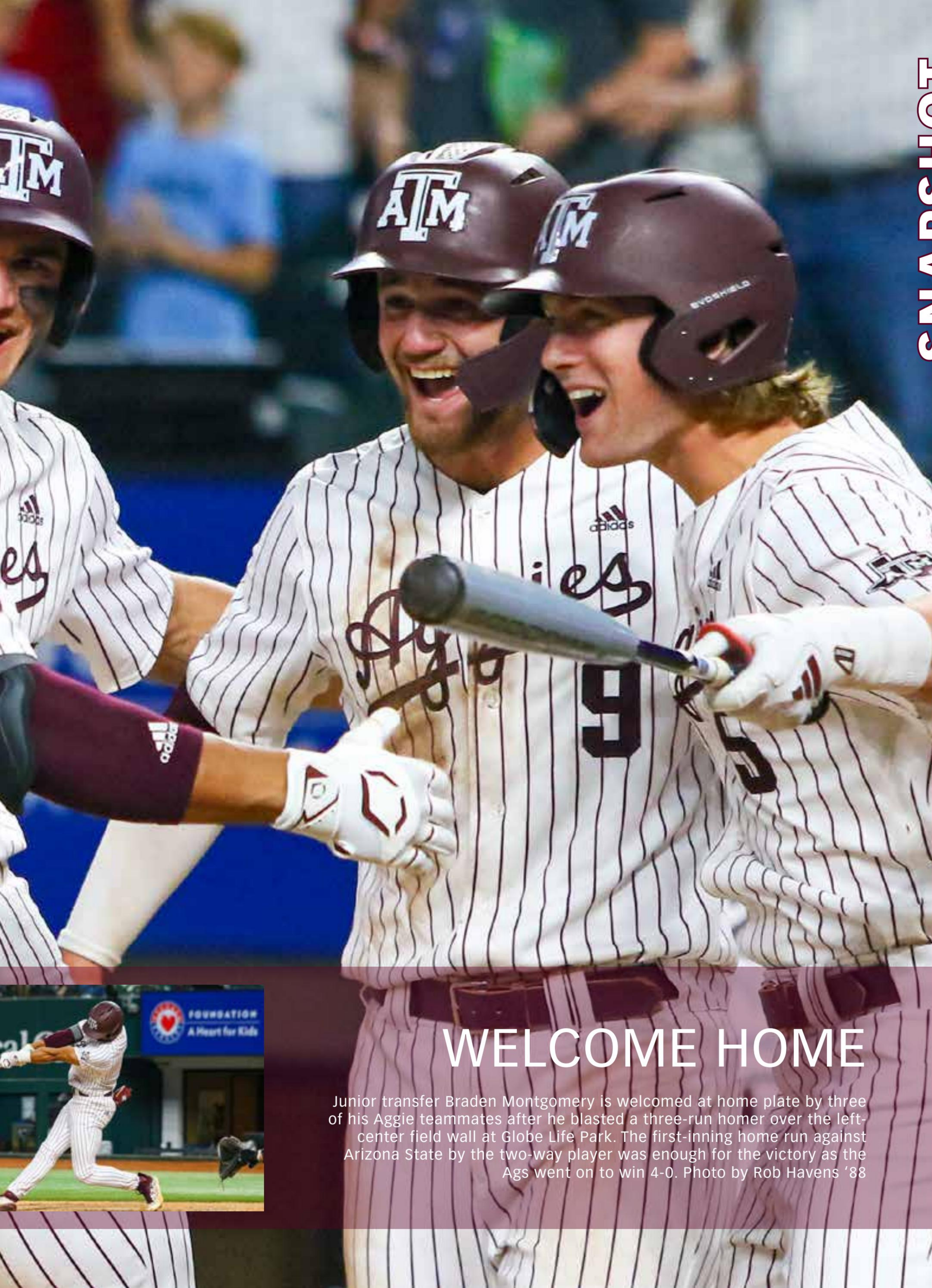




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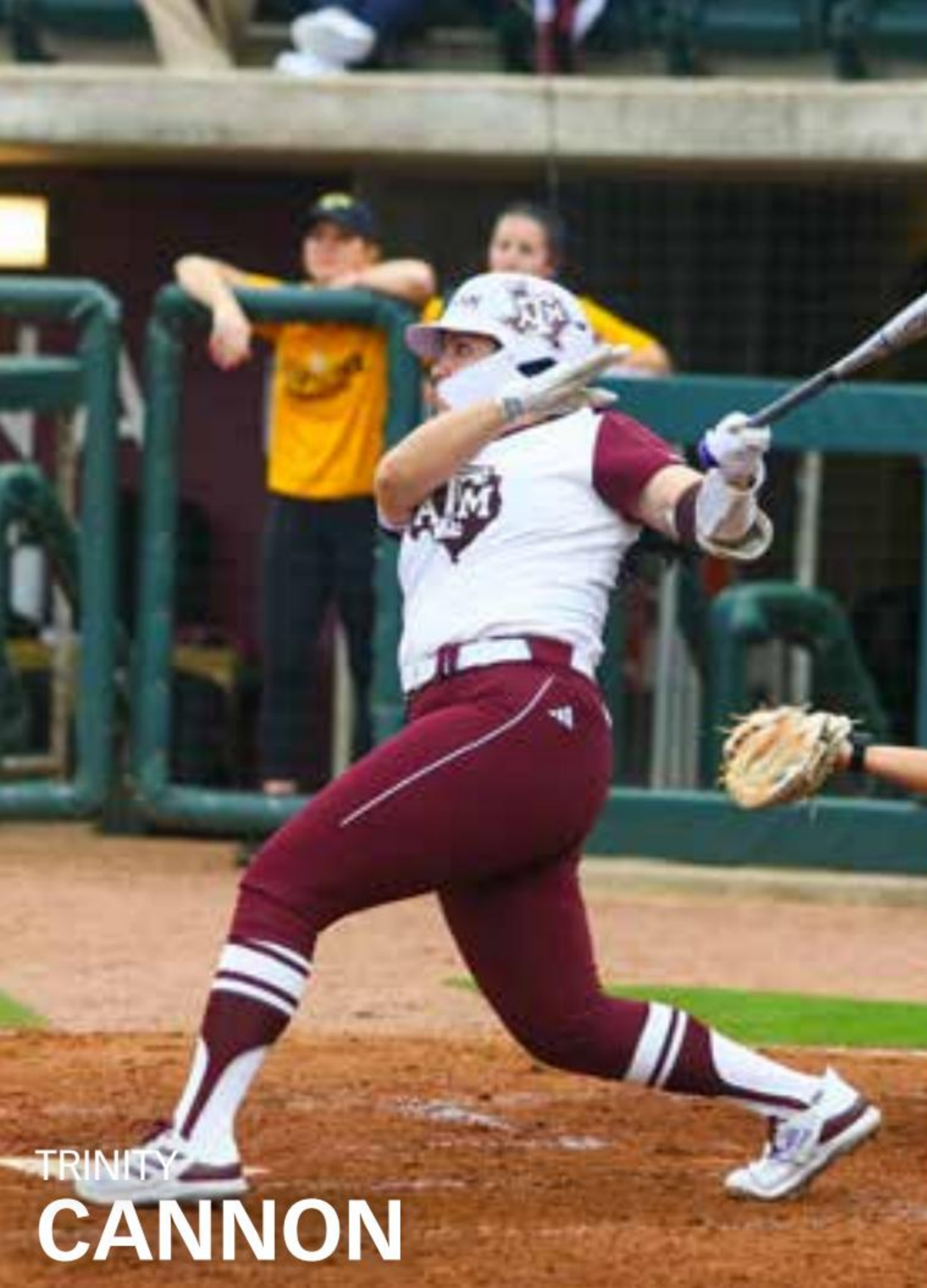




## WELCOME HOME

Junior transfer Braden Montgomery is welcomed at home plate by three of his Aggie teammates after he blasted a three-run homer over the left-center field wall at Globe Life Park. The first-inning home run against Arizona State by the two-way player was enough for the victory as the Ags went on to win 4-0. Photo by Rob Havens '88





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**SOFTBALL**

Our softball team has had an incredible start as well. Sporting a 28-7 overall record and an 8-4 SEC record, the Aggies have won three out of their first four conference series. The Aggies swept #22 South Carolina and #25 Auburn at home. They started the season with a 12-0 record and have been ranked as high as No. 12 in the country. Their 28-4 ledger was the hottest start in the past 20 years!

**WOMEN'S TENNIS**

Competing against some of the best teams in the country, the women's tennis team got off to a bit of a rocky start, though they've rebounded nicely and head into April with a 16-6 overall record. The Aggies are currently 8-1 in the SEC with a four-match winning streak. They are #13 in the country and just came off a dominating win over LSU in Baton Rouge. The Aggies are led by junior Mary Stoiana, who has 25 singles victories already this season.



MARY  
**STOIANA**



JEANETTE  
**MIRELES**



MIA  
**KUPRES**





COACH  
**WIGGINS**



NOAH  
**THOMAS**



GIULIO  
**PEREGO**

## MEN'S TENNIS

Texas A&M's men's tennis squad is having a stellar season (so far). They are currently 18-5 with a 7-2 conference record. The team has been almost unbeatable at home, putting together an 11-1 record at the Mitchell Tennis Center. The men are also coming off a big win in Baton Rouge as they tamed the Tigers 5-2. They also have wins over #8 Tennessee and #22 Mississippi State, who they swept 7-0.

## SPRING FOOTBALL

The Aggies have started spring practice for the first time in the Mike Elko era. From the little time the media gets to watch them, it looks like everything is going great. The spring game is around the corner and according to Elko the Maroon & White game will be played like a real game and will give the 12th Man their first look at the Aggies under the new staff.



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# SCOREBOARD

## BASEBALL

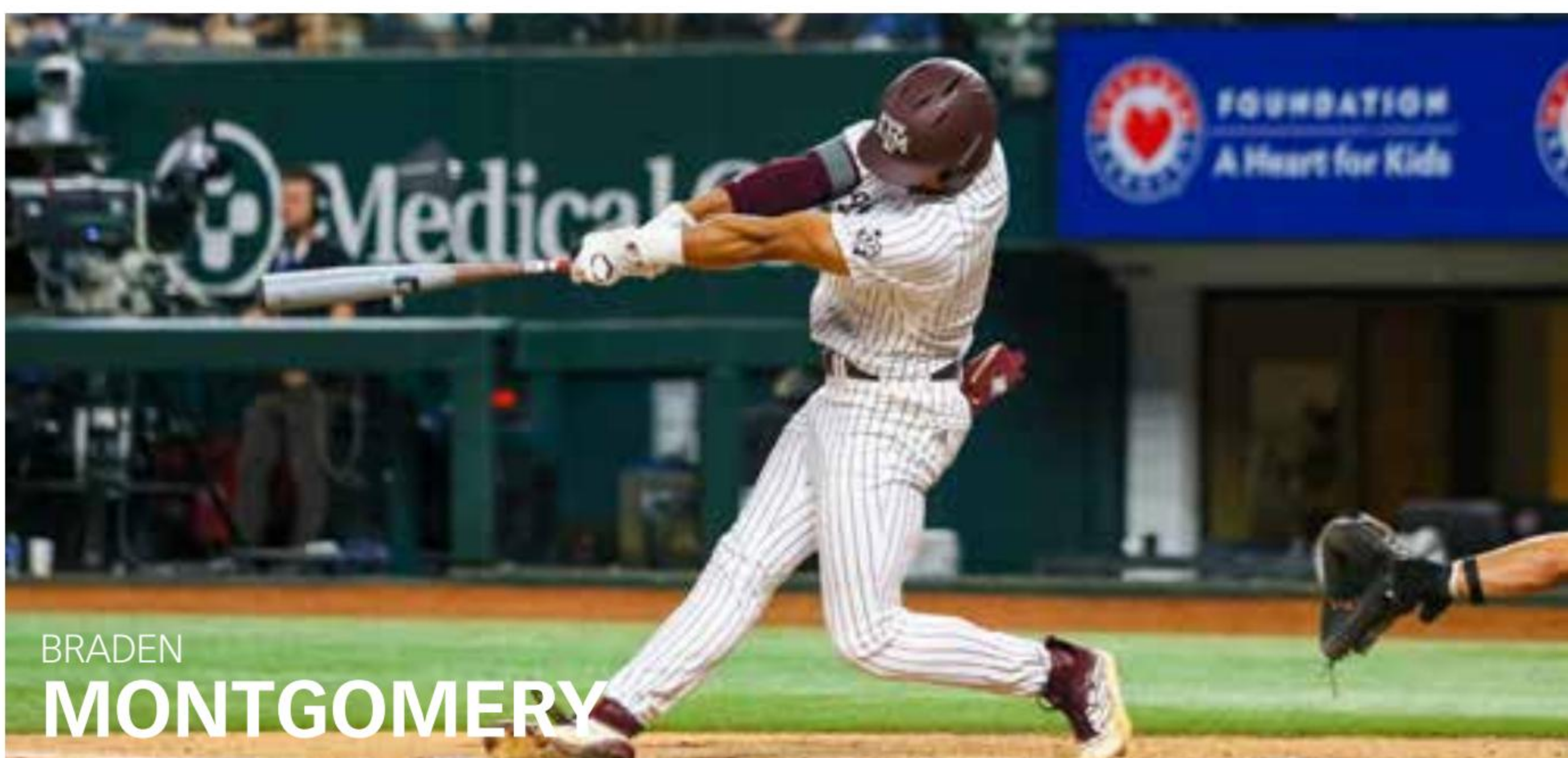
The Aggie baseball team has had a tremendous start to the season, and is currently ranked #3 in the country. They are 25-3 overall and 6-3 in the SEC. The Aggies went 3-0 at the Globe Life Field Series and beat #14 Texas in Austin 9-2. The starting pitching has really improved from last season, plus Evan Aschenbeck has been phenomenal out of the bullpen. The combination of Jace LaViolette and Stanford transfer Braden Montgomery has been outstanding.



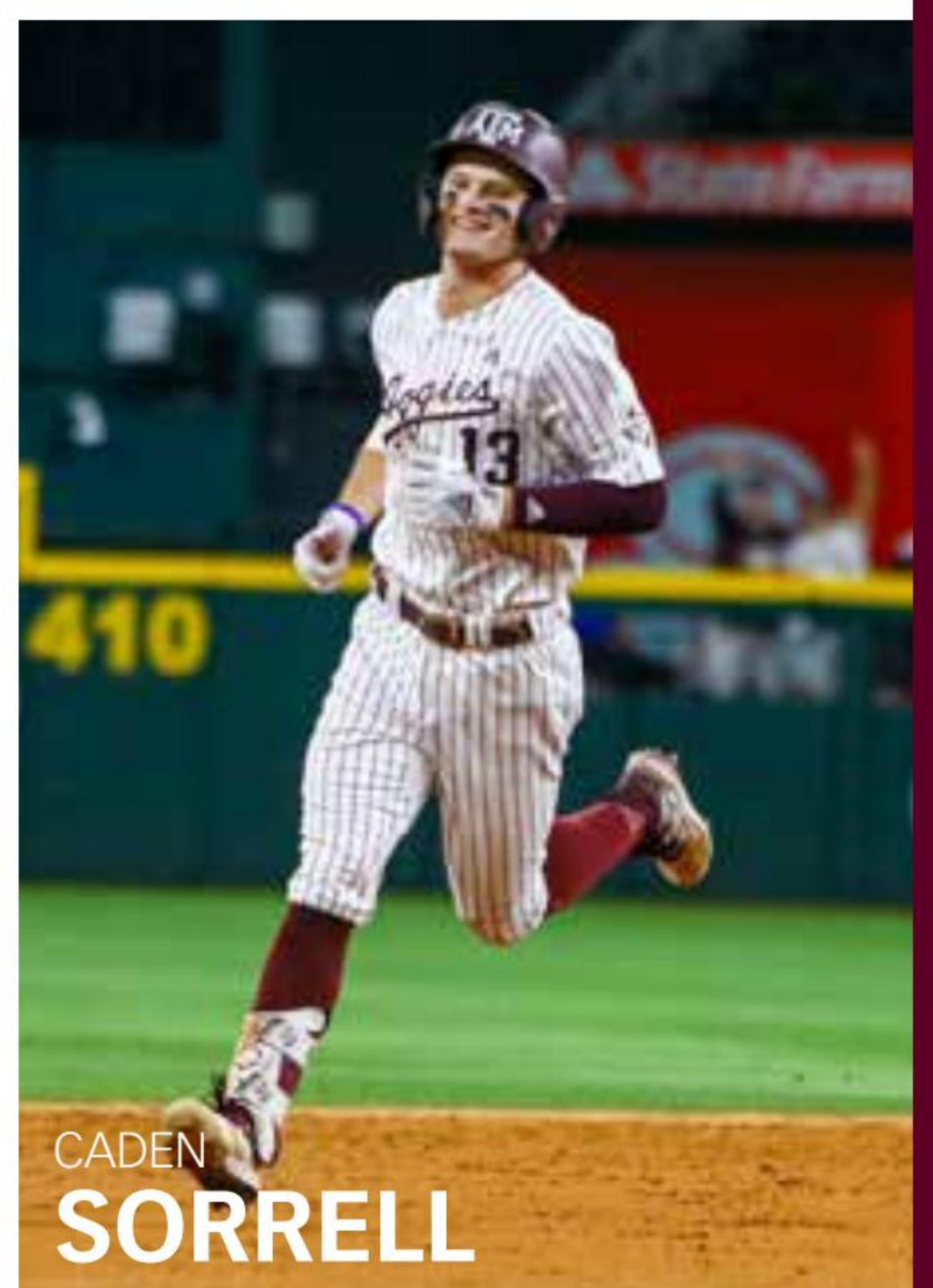
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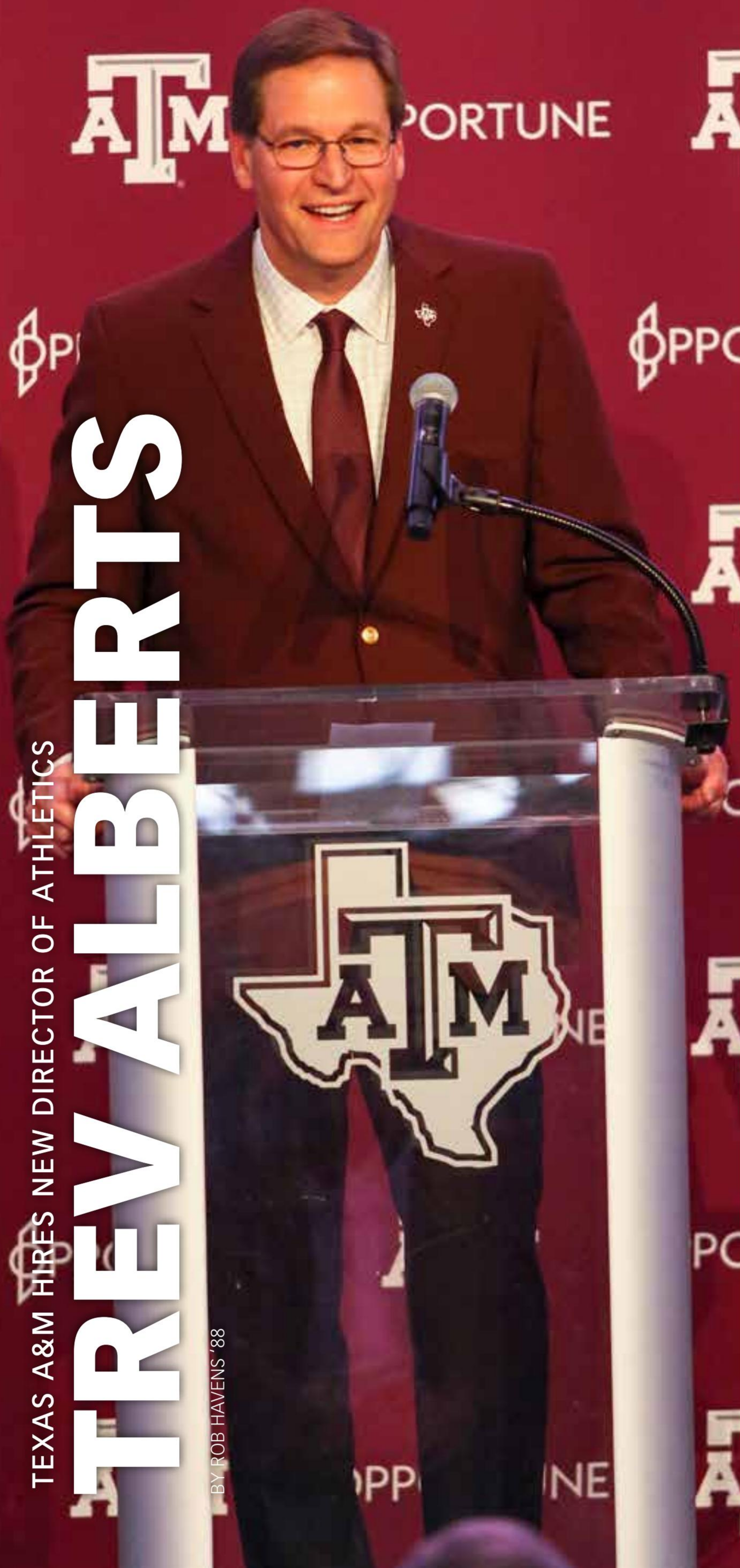
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TEXAS A&M HIRES NEW DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

# TREV ALBERTS

BY ROB HAVENS '88



In the ever-changing world of college athletics, it is imperative to have great leadership. So when Texas A&M president Mark A. Welsh III interviewed the final five candidates that the search committee had recommended, he knew he had to select a great leader. With our student-athletes as a priority in making the decision, he found his guy in Trev Alberts who he described as “An inspirational role model who has walked in their shoes”.

The search committee screened, reviewed, and interviewed candidates from around the country looking for the best fit for Texas A&M. We play in a conference whose slogan is “It just means more” and the same can be said for being the director of athletics at Texas A&M-It just means more!

In his welcome celebration inside Kyle Field, Trev Alberts admitted he was not looking to leave Nebraska, a place where he (literally) became a legend on the gridiron. A school where he gave blood sweat and tears over his hall-of-fame career, where his jersey was retired and his name was sketched forever in the stonewalls inside the stadium. But when he got the call that A&M was interested in him, he knew that he had to listen.

Alberts said, “At 54 years old you see opportunities. Texas A&M is a pretty remarkable place with a remarkable trajectory with remarkable leadership. So as you think about the future and you think about some of these evolving changes much of which is yet undefined, we don’t know where this is going. But part of what is really intriguing to me about this place is under General Welsh’s leadership that’s gonna help to define what the future looks like and that’s really exciting to me.”

During the press conference, Alberts admitted that he wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for General Welsh. He explained that leadership is really important to him. As he started to look at A&M and President Welsh he said, “Wow! A



four-star general is the president of the university. I started watching a lot of videos and I'm like, my goodness this guy is the real deal!" With all of the changes coming in college athletics, Alberts understands the importance of great leadership and he saw that in General Welsh. He also referenced a Muster speech that Welsh gave where he talked about, "All those corny things that still matter at a place like Texas A&M, and those corny things still matter to me too!"

Our new athletics director took the time to thank the folks at the University of Nebraska. Besides his family and his faith, he explained that he owes a debt of gratitude to the place that gave him everything else. Saying that he would always be a Cornhusker. Alberts introduced his wife of 28 years Angela and said she is "The smart one in the family." He also introduced his son Chase, a West Point graduate and an officer in the United States Army, his daughter Ashtynne, and his other daughter Breanna who couldn't make the trip because of spring break. Alberts also has a daughter-in-law Cassie and a grandson Walker John.

After his college playing days, Alberts was drafted by the Indianapolis Colts where he played for three years before an injury

ended his NFL career. He would go on to be an analyst on college and professional football games for ESPN, CNN/SI, and CBS. He then became the athletic Director for the University of Nebraska at Omaha for nine years. There, he sought counsel from business leaders and learned the ins and outs of running an athletic department. He would then move on to the flagship institution of Nebraska in Lincoln where he led the Cornhusker athletic department for three years.

Alberts sees Texas A&M as an "Elite institution with unlimited potential." He laid out five things that he will do as our new AD. First, he said that they will have a hard-working athletic department and that will start with him. He said, "We are not going to have a lot of talking but a lot of working."

Secondly, there will be a unity of purpose in the department in strategy and vision with full transparency for all to see. He also admitted there will be mistakes, but they will own and fix them. He asked for grace as they learned all of the traditions at A&M.

His department will be willing to adjust and adapt to the changing landscape. He explained that they would be running a business "Clean and disciplined," but they wouldn't compromise values. The student-

athletes will be the focus as they serve and honor them, and at the same time, they will run it as a business.

Lastly, he understands the importance of the athletic department being a part of the community. It is "the front porch of the institution." He plans to embrace all of A&M's traditions as the program stays at the forefront of helping to define the future of college athletics.

A couple of the things that drew Alberts to this place were the agriculture and the military values that are so important to Texas A&M. He grew up on a farm in Iowa and understands the importance of hard work. His son and future son-in-law are both West Point grads, so he values the military as well.

General Welsh in his first meeting with Trev Alberts after arriving on campus told him three things. He said, "First I told him he doesn't know it yet, but this is the opportunity he has been waiting for his entire life. And we're going to prove that to him. I also told him to make Aggie athletics the No. 1 department in the country. And to do that I told him, number three to Beat The Hell Outta Everybody!" We are hopeful that Alberts will follow his new marching orders from General Welsh. ■







## COACH ELKO ASSEMBLES **TOP NOTCH STAFF**

BY GAVIN GREENVILLE '24



### TROOPER **TAYLOR**

Texas A&M's new associate head coach for the offense & running back squad is—Trooper Taylor. Born and raised in Cuero, Texas; he has 30 years of experience coaching football. He was on staff at Auburn for the 2010 BCS National Championship run, served at Duke for 5 years, and is one of the “top 25 recruiters in the nation” according to Rivals.com. After Elko decided to come to A&M, Taylor was named the interim coach for the Blue Devils.



### JAY **BATEMAN**

This past December, Jay Bateman was hired as the defensive coordinator and linebacker coach. Elko and Bateman worked together early in their careers in Richmond, Virginia. He has 25 years of coaching experience. He spent the last two seasons at Florida as the inside linebackers coach. Before that, he served as co-defensive coordinator for three seasons at North Carolina. Under his direction, the Tar Heels ranked in the top 35 for scoring defense.



### COLLIN **KLEIN**

Our new offensive coordinator and quarterback coach comes to Aggieland from Manhattan, Kansas where he played and coached since 2008. Born and raised in Loveland, Colorado; he graduated from Kansas State in 2011. He brings 10 years of coaching experience to Texas A&M. He played quarterback for the Wildcats from 2008 to 2012. In his final year, he became one of the Heisman Trophy Finalists along with Johnny Manziel, and earned the Johnny Unitas Award! During his time at K State, he served as quarterbacks coach and OC. Last year the Wildcat offense (under his direction) had one of the nation's highest-scoring offenses.



### JORDAN **PETERSON**

Peterson returns to College Station as our Co-Defensive Coordinator and Defensive Backs coach. Jordan played four years in the defensive backfield for the Aggies where he made 81 tackles and broke up 15 passes. He also started his coaching career here at A&M as a graduate assistant coach. After coaching stints at Fresno State and New Mexico, Peterson landed at Kansas where he coached safeties and became the Defensive Pass Game Coordinator and Defensive Backs coach for the Jayhawks.





HOLMON

## WIGGINS

Our next coach is a big pick-up from Nick Saban's staff at Alabama where he was the Assistant Head Coach of Offense and Wide receivers for the past five seasons. Wiggins coached Heisman Trophy winner DeVonta Smith as well as NFL first-round picks Jaylen Waddle, Henry Ruggs III, Jameson Williams, and Jerry Jeudy. Holmon was a running back and punt returner at the University of New Mexico.



ISHMAEL

## ARISTIDE

This will be the fifth season that Aristide has coached under the leadership of Mike Elko. He returns to Aggieland after two years at Duke. From 2019-2020 he served as Senior Defensive Analyst and Secondary Assistant while Elko was our defensive coordinator. He also coached at Auburn, Ole Miss, and Miami. Aristide played his college football at Purdue, where he played safety and wide receiver.



ADAM

## CUSHING

Aggie fans are eager to see the difference Cushing will make to our offensive line. Our new run game coordinator joined Elko again in College Station after serving in the same role with the Blue Devils the last two seasons. Under his guidance, the Duke offense scored a program-record 31 rushing touchdowns and tallied 2,394 rushing yards in his first season.



PATRICK

## DOUGHERTY

Elko brought Dougherty with him from Duke where he served as Special Teams Coordinator and Tight Ends coach for the last two seasons. A 2008 graduate of Ohio Dominican College, Patrick was a four-year letterman at linebacker. He coached for nine years at Ball State. During his first year at Duke, the Devils ranked first in the country in punt return average.



TONY

## JEROD-EDDIE

Jerod-Eddie is the only holdover from the previous staff. A beloved Aggie football player turned coach, the 12thMan is ecstatic to have him join coach Elko's staff. A Desoto product, Jerod-Eddie played defensive line for Texas A&M from 2008-2011. He played for the San Francisco 49ers from 2012-2016. He returned to Aggieland in 2020 to serve under Aggie Legend Terry Price and will continue to coach the defensive line in Elko's staff.



SEAN

## SPENCER

"Coach Chaos" has arrived in Aggieland. The defensive line coach who spent the last two years in Florida, brings over 20 years of experience and a nickname that says it all. Sean Spencer has coached at UMass, Bowling Green, Vanderbilt, and Penn State. A native of Hartford, Connecticut, Spencer played safety at Clarion University in Pennsylvania. He also spent two years coaching the D Line for the New York Giants.



TOMMY

## MOFFITT

Arguably one of the biggest Elko hires was our new strength and conditioning coach Tommy Moffitt. He joined the team in December and brought with him 30 years of experience. Under Moffitt's leadership, the LSU Tigers won three national titles under three different head coaches. Tommy spent 21 seasons in Baton Rouge before coming to Texas A&M. During his time there, he won multiple S&C coach of the year awards.





MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL  
EARN TICKETS TO THE

# BIG DANCE

BY ROB HAVENS '88

The road to the NCAA Tournament was different for our men's and women's basketball programs but in the end, they both arrived at their destination by earning tickets to The Big Dance. Only 68 teams had their names called during the selection show and according to experts, both of our teams were on the bubble.

Buzz explained, "When we arrived in Nashville (for the SEC Tournament) we were not in the tournament," but after a close victory over Ole Miss and a big win over two-seed Kentucky the Aggies earned a #9 seed and an at large bid into the tournament.

Coach Williams said, "That was my tenth selection show as a head coach, and not that I don't remember the first nine, that was (paused) more real, more emotional, more raw than the previous nine." For Williams and his staff, who have tried their best to figure out how







the committee chooses the 68 after being left out two years ago and under-seeded last year, the quest began as they built their schedule before this season.

They were determined to schedule a stronger nonconference schedule and then win enough games to earn a bid. The team had early success and a couple of huge wins over #6 Kentucky and #6 Tennessee on their way to a 9-9 conference record and 20-13 overall. But a five-game skid in February that included a loss to a 7-win Vanderbilt team created a scenario that looked like there was no way they would earn a bid.

Still, this team would not give up. They won their last three regular-season games, and two games in the tournament to get back on the bubble. The win over two-seed Kentucky would propel the Aggies to a nine-seed and a date against eight-seed Nebraska.

For Joni Taylor and our women's team, the road was different. Last year, during Taylor's first season as the head coach, the team struggled to a 9-20 record. Sometimes playing with only seven healthy players, Taylor assured her team that this year would be different. The goal was to make it in the tournament in year two and that is exactly what they accomplished.

Taylor went out and got help via the transfer portal; having Endyia Rogers, Aicha Coulibaly, and Lauren Ware made an immediate impact. The Aggies were 6-10 in conference play and 19-12 overall. After an injury sidelined point guard Endyia Rogers, the team went 1-5 in their last six games, putting the team on the bubble. When Rogers returned to action, the team had a big win over Mississippi State in the second round of the SEC Tournament as well as a great showing against defending national champion South

Carolina in the quarterfinals to give themselves a chance.

When their name was called out early during the selection show, the team went crazy. According to Taylor, "We thought we had done enough to get in, but you don't know." She said that she hopes the team remembers that feeling because sometimes you can take getting in for granted and she never wants her team to do that.

Both programs experienced genuine excitement hearing their names called. Both coaches talked about how proud they are of their teams. Both groups never quit and fought to the end to give them an opportunity. The opportunity is earned and not given as the players get ready to compete for "One Shining Moment". ■







# AGGIES TWO-STEP AT THE BIG DANCE

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Although the Aggies' appearance in the NCAA Tournament was shorter than we hoped for, the two games we played in were some of the most exciting of the first two rounds. Following a five-game skid, it looked doubtful that the Aggies would be putting on their dancing shoes this year, but Buzz and the boys put it together and played their best basketball at the end.

It seemed only fitting that the nine-seed Aggies would begin their "dance" in a music city like Memphis, the birthplace of Elvis. The city is famous for Rhythm and Blues and Jazz and the arena is just around the corner of one of the most iconic streets in America - Beale Street, the home of the Blues and the true birthplace of Rock 'n' Roll.

The first step of our journey was a matchup with Nebraska. The NCAA loves storylines and a game against the school that we recently took their athletic director was just what the doctor ordered. As our guys took the floor, a sea of red filled the arena. When the teams were announced, The Big Red Machine went nuts. An NCAA tourney game can be somewhat of a sterile environment at times as most fans will be locals who are simply there to be a part of the event. Although a slew of Nebraska fans made the long trip from Lincoln to cheer on their team.

It was (definitely) a home-court advantage for the Huskers as the fans cheered and booed on every possession at the beginning of the game. The fans

stood for the first ten minutes of the contest and were (clearly) the sixth man for the game.

The game was like a heavyweight fight at the beginning, as both teams threw haymakers hoping to knock out the other team. Nebraska's Keisei Tominaga, nicknamed the Japanese Steph Curry, hit 3 early three-pointers inciting the crowd. But Wade Taylor answered with a barrage of three-pointers of his own to keep the Aggies close.

The Aggies offense played their best half of basketball in the entire season. The three-headed monster of Taylor, Radford, and Obaseki was unstoppable. The Aggies also got help off the bench from Henry Coleman III and Jace Carter who scored meaningful baskets as well. The Aggies pulled away from the Huskers and scored a program-record 58 points in the first half.

In the second half, the Husker fans would have no reason to stand as the Aggies would continue to dominate. Taylor would knock down a career-high seven threes and finish with 25 points. Manny would score 22 and Boots would score 20 as the three guards accounted for 67 of A&M's 98 points.

The Aggies celebrated a 98-83 victory over the Huskers on the floor and in the stands as the disappointed Nebraska fans headed for the exits and the Japanese Steph Curry left the floor in tears.

The win set up a second-round contest with No. 1









Seed University of Houston, the team that had spent most of the year at the top of the polls. An early season contest in the Toyota Center against the Cougars without Boots playing had been one of the most exciting games of the year. It would be hard to top that one, but this game most definitely did.

The game was a back-and-forth battle in the first 15 minutes until the Cougars tried to pull away, but Boots Radford was not having it, as he continued to hit shots at the rim and from the perimeter. The Aggies also got some offensive help from Andy Garcia who worked hard around the basket to get rebounds and put-backs. The Aggies drove to the basket at every opportunity and drew a lot of fouls, but unfortunately, the Ags would struggle from the line on this day. At the half, the Aggies trailed by five 43-38 and were struggling at the free throw line 11-22.

At halftime, the referees saw the discrepancy in foul calls (Aggies with 7, Houston with 14) and decided to switch it up. The Aggies stayed aggressive, but the physicality at the rim went sight unseen by the guys in stripes and the calls on the Ags increased. The Cougar lead would balloon to 12 with less than two minutes to play.

The Aggies would not give up. An inbounds pass for a dunk by Solo and a three by Taylor with 1:10 to play made it a five-point game. With just 10 seconds left in regulation and down by three Taylor threw up a prayer from the midcourt logo that went off the rim and then he gathered the rebound and got one last desperation shot that fell into the hands of Carter before being tied up, giving the Aggies one last inbounds play with 1.2 seconds.

After a timeout that allowed Buzz to set up the final play, the referee handed the ball to Boots. The players went in motion and Garcia attempted to hip-screen the defender chasing Taylor. Andy slid back behind the line where Radford found him with a bounce pass. Garcia gathered the ball and then



shot the three as he fell backward to the floor. All eyes were on the ball as it traveled through the air. The buzzer went off and the red lights framing the backboard came on as the shot found the bottom of the net. The Aggie bench went nuts and the players surrounded Garcia as he lay on the floor with his face buried in his arms.

The Cougars would play most of the overtime period with four starters on the bench, having fouled out during regulation or overtime. Obaseki had fouled out as well for Texas A&M. Even so, the Cougars continued to hit shots. With his team down five and a minute left in overtime, Taylor hit a three that brought the Ags within two. But senior guard Jamal Shead would dribble into the lane and make a circus shot in the paint to extend the lead and put the game out of reach. The Ags would throw up a couple of desperation shots at the end but finally fell 100-95 in overtime.

It was a heartbreaking loss as our team had worked so hard to reach this point. They had won their first NCAA Tournament game in the Buzz Williams era at Texas A&M. The team had battled back from a 12-point deficit with less than two to play and Andy Garcia had made a miracle three with 1.2 seconds. It wasn't the ending we hoped for, but this trip to the dance will be remembered for years. And as we say goodbye to our seniors Eli Lawrence, Wildens Leveque, and Tyrece Radford we want to say thank you for all that you did, now go be great! We look forward to dancing again next year! ■



ROB HAVENS '88





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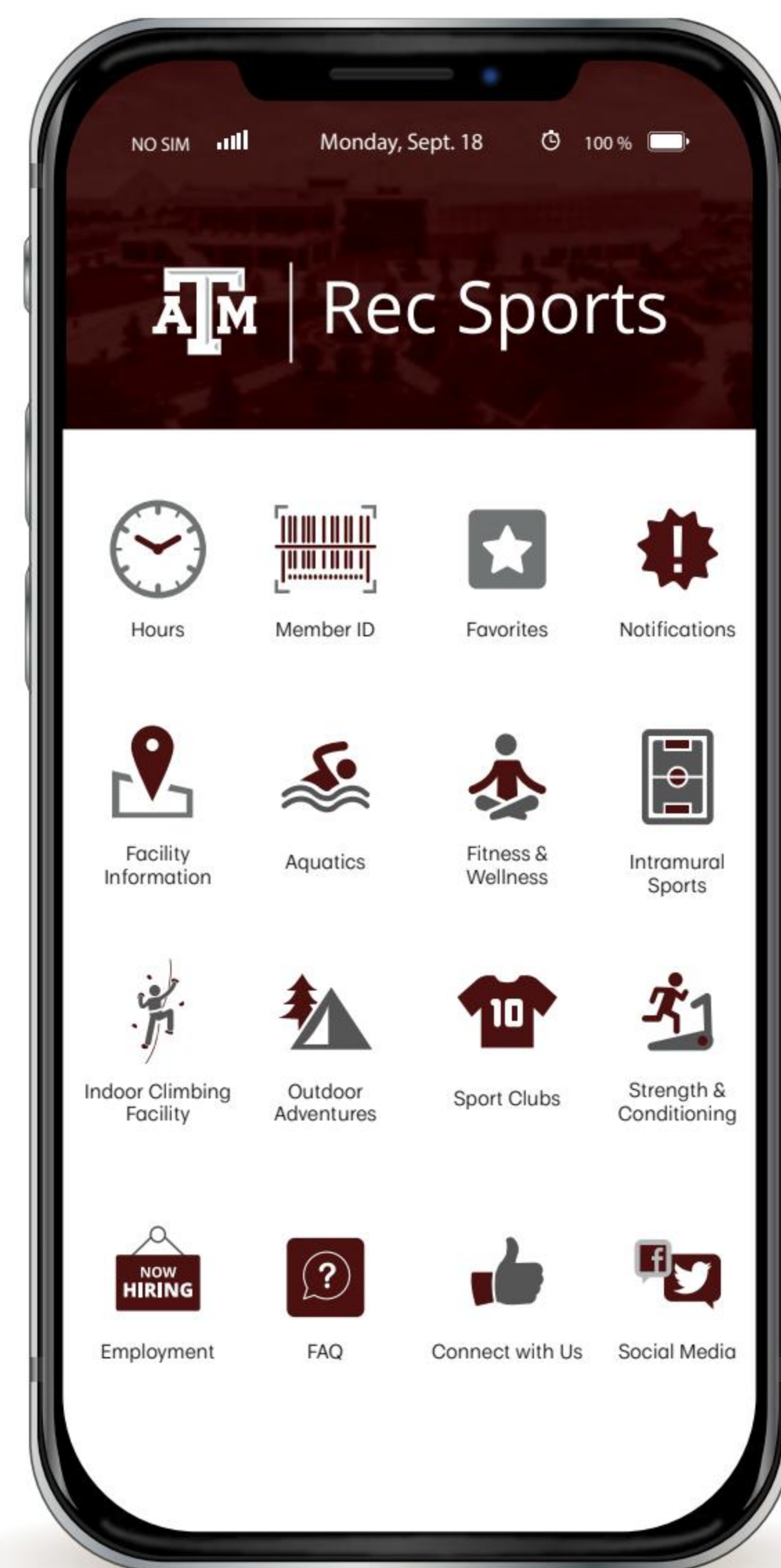


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### WOMEN'S WATER POLO CLUB

BY ROB HAVENS '88

The members of the Women's Water Polo Club may be some of the best-conditioned athletes on our campus. The sport requires competitors to not only swim fast and endure plenty of physical contact under the water, but they must be able to tread water throughout the competition. Members must have strength, size, mobility, and quickness in order to compete at the highest level.

The Women's Water Polo Club was established in 1997. The majority of the current team has previous experience ranging anywhere from 1 to 16 years, but they do have members who have never played before. There are 34 players on this year's squad.

The sport is similar to soccer, except it's played in the water. A game consists of four quarters, and whoever scores the most goals wins the match. Each team has six "field" players and a goalie. Field players must pass, catch, and shoot with

only one hand while the goalies may use two hands.

The competitive season begins in the spring. The Aggies hosted their first tournament in February, and the A and B teams had a collective five wins, including two victories over the University of Texas. The team is excited to host the Collegiate Water Polo Association 2024 Women's Water Polo National Tournament on May 3rd-5th. The winning team at the conference tournament in April will advance to the national tournament.

Club President Ava Rodriguez explained why she joined the team, "After high school, I knew I wanted to keep playing and had heard so many great things about the team here at Texas A&M! I quickly made such close friendships, and my love for the sport continued to grow!"

When we asked Rodriguez what makes a great water polo competitor she explained, "While technical skill is

definitely important, the most notable players are those that work to be a great teammate. Team chemistry in water polo makes a huge difference when it comes to competing."

In last year's national tournament, the team finished 5th overall, becoming the highest-placing team from Texas in program history.

Although the competitions are a lot of fun, Rodriguez said her favorite things about being on the team are the lifelong friendships she has created. She said, "I'm so grateful to be a part of this team. This is my second year as an officer and first year being president; this year has allowed me to watch my teammates grow as players and as people. Having a great officer team by my side has really helped contribute to the growth of our club as well."

### JUDO CLUB

BY ROB HAVENS '88

The Judo Club has a long and proud history here at Texas A&M. Established in 1962 by Cpt. Lester R. Hewitt, the club started when A&M was primarily an all-male military institution that required membership in the Corps of Cadets. According to Club President Isabella Garriga, "Judo was quite popular in the military as many officers were stationed in Japan and were learning the art. When these officers returned, they would bring their love for judo back to A&M."

The current team's regular opponents are the University of Texas, Texas Tech, San Jose State University, and West Point. Although they do have tournaments in the fall, competition season begins in the spring. They just had a dominating victory at the NCJA SW Regionals, which they hosted here in Aggieland for their eighth consecutive club win. The team is excited to host the NCJA Collegiate National Championships this year on April 6.

There are approximately 50 members on the team and about 25 of those compete. Garriga told us that the majority of new members join without

any judo experience. Some want to become proficient in self-defense or have participated in other martial arts. At the same time, others took a judo class for A&M credit and want to continue to learn and compete. Garriga said, "There is a group of people who come to judo with prior experience. This final group, although small, contains some of the best collegiate judokas in the United States and creates a strong core for the rest of the team to learn from."

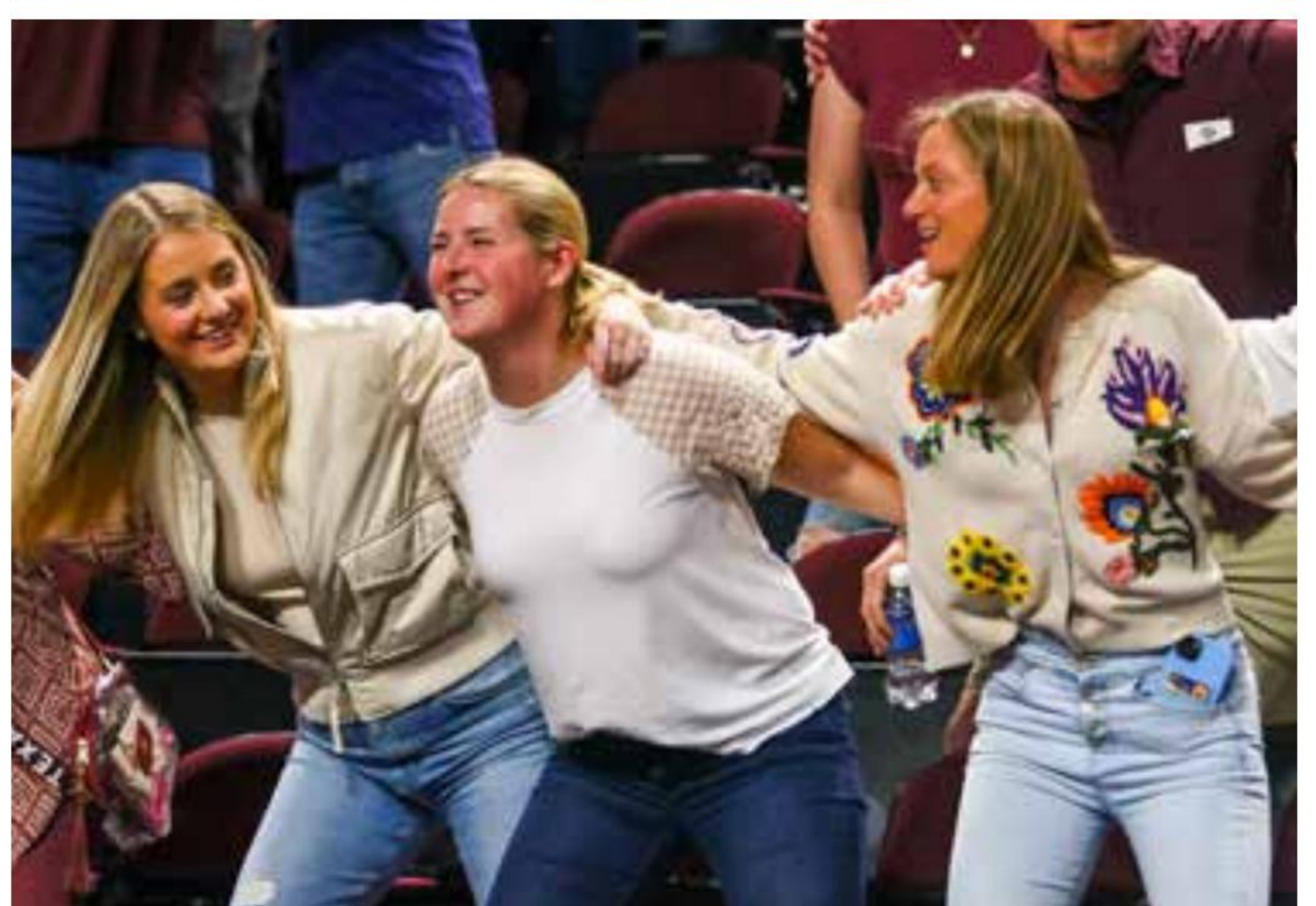
We asked Garriga what makes a great judo competitor and she explained, "A great competitor is molded by the drive and passion they have for the sport. Of course, they work hard for what they want and they stay consistent, but there is something about a four-minute match that requires more than just athleticism and skill; it requires heart. Judokas are used to fighting for four minutes, usually longer in practice. But something about those four minutes, in a competition, is different. And it's not just about trying to get the gold. It's about the feeling you get when you're on the mat, doing the

combos you've been working on, making sure you get the grip you want, fighting for the throw you want. Good competitors fight to win. Great competitors fight to improve their judo. The best competitors know that the only way to be the best judoka is by learning from both wins and losses."

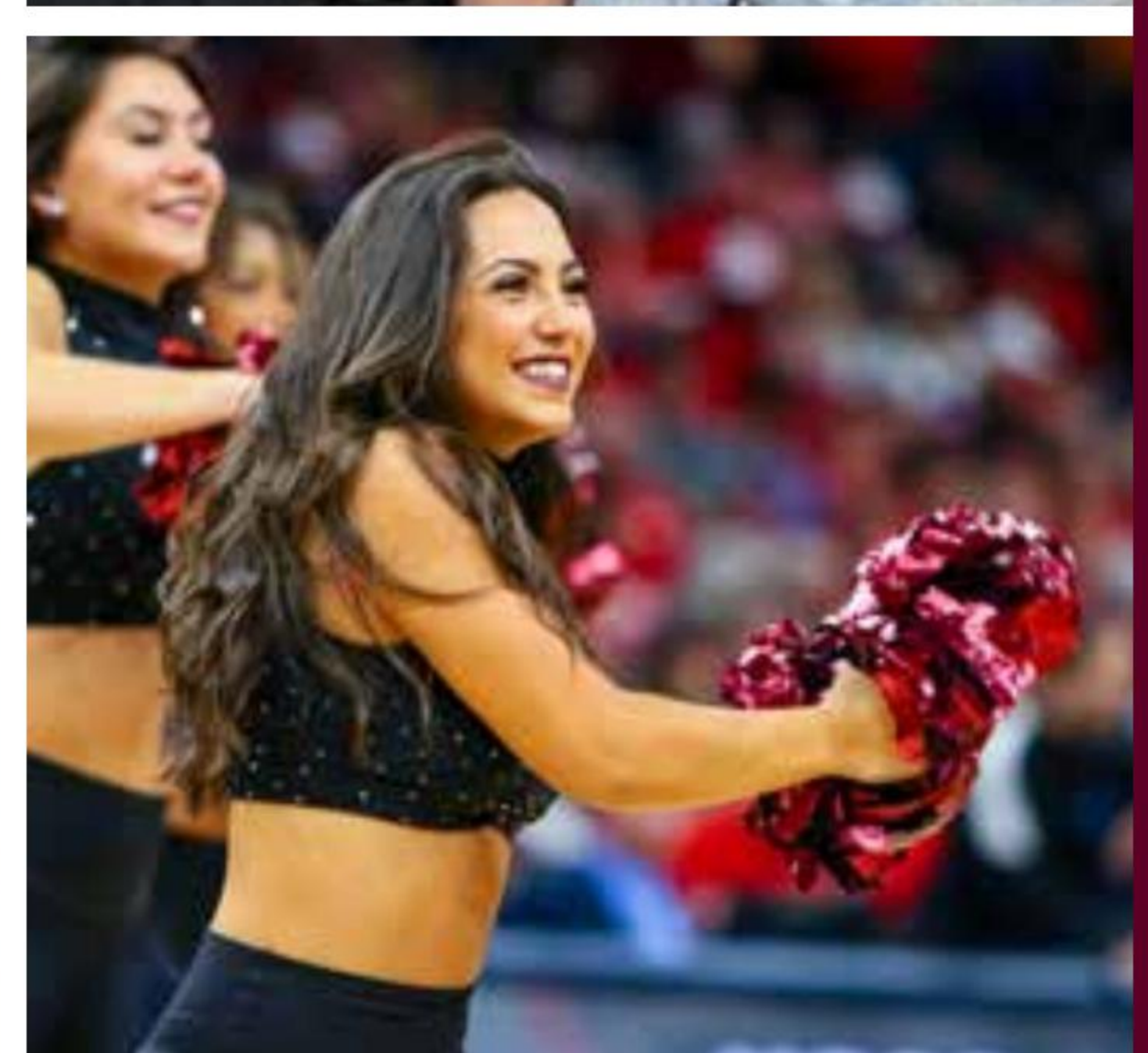
It is obvious that the longevity and strength of this club are due to the passion of its members and officers who have participated over the years. So we asked Garriga what her favorite thing about the club was and she told us, "It would have to be competing for Texas A&M. Ever since I was little, I have always wanted to go to A&M and be a pre-med student, but I also wanted to continue competing for the USA Judo Team. Texas A&M Judo has given me the opportunity to do just that."











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